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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION - CUBA: CASTRO TRANSITION

11. On August 7, business and financial daily "Diario Financiero" (circ 20,000) carried a column by international commentator Libardo Buitrago entitled, "Fidel: Succession or Transition." Quote:

"Fidel's announcement last week is the key to what could be the island's political future.... By delegating tasks...to the closest, most ideologically conservative and toughest advisors of the Cuban Communist Party (CCP)...Fidel has transferred his legitimacy as the architect of the Cuban Revolution to the institutional framework of the CCP...and by allowing the transition to occur without dissension over leadership.... Cuba has begun an internal transition. We have yet to see the real impact that this will have once the current leader is no longer alive, and the post-Fidel era begins, whereby other actors will come into play, such as the dissidents and Cuban exiles. But as long as Fidel is officially alive, the Cuban Revolution that he embodies will live on. After that, it is an entirely different ball game."

12. On August 5, conservative, influential newspaper-of-record "El Mercurio" (circ., 116,807) weekly round-up column, "The Cuban Revolution Will No Longer Be the Same." Quote:

"Cuba is in a good position to begin moving toward a democratic political system and a free economy.... All the theories about the end of the Castro era are now in debate: whether the transition must come from within the island, whether the exiles in Miami have the power to speed up the fall of Communism, whether Washington's plan to support Cubans will be effective, and whether the European Union and other international actors must play a role in the process. But even if Fidel recovers, it is possible that the Cuban revolution will no longer be the same."

KELLY